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FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4350  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6432  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 7683

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage March 7 on the aftermath of President Chen Shui-bian's "Four Wants and One Without" remarks Sunday, on Vice President Annette Lu's announcement to run for the DPP's presidential primary Tuesday, and on the 2008 presidential elections. All papers carried on their inside pages the State Department's statement Monday in response to President Chen's remarks. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a banner headline on page four that read "United States Expects Bian to Clarify and Stick to His Pledge."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's remarks at the Chinese National People's Congress Monday and cautioned Taiwan to be alert to China's various united-front tactics against Taiwan. A "Liberty Times" analysis commented on Washington's decision to downplay President Chen's "Four Wants" remarks and said the United States had determined that they were just Chen's own wishes. A separate "Liberty Times" commentary, however, said Chen's remarks are meant to find a way out for the next Taiwan president. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" discussed China's growing national defense budget and called China "a clear and present danger" to Taiwan and to the world. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" said Chen's remarks were aimed at "seizing the initiative for the DPP in setting a positive agenda for the upcoming year-end Legislative Yuan elections and even the March 2008 presidential sweepstakes." An op-ed in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily," however, said Chen made the "Four Wants" remarks deliberately to contrast with Chinese President Hu Jintao's "Four Nos." End summary.

A) "Be Vigilant of the Various Deepening Signs Showing China's United-Front Tactics against Taiwan"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (3/7):

"... [Chinese Premier] Wen Jiabao's remarks [at China's National People's Congress March 5] indicated the following points of concern when it comes to China's current efforts toward Taiwan: First, it emphasizes economic united-front tactics. Over the past decade, China's economic united-front tactics toward Taiwan have reaped a very good harvest. Taiwan's massive investments in China have pushed Taiwan toward a dangerous road of merging with China economically. ... Second, it emphasizes expanding its political united-front tactics. China has been striving to befriend frustrated Taiwan politicians since 2000 in order to turn them into a tool for Taiwan's opposition parties to restrain the ruling party. ... Third, it opposes de jure Taiwan independence. Taiwan's sovereignty is not affiliated with the People's Republic of China, and the so-called status quo in the Taiwan Strait refers to Taiwan's independent sovereignty. But even though Taiwan is now an

independent sovereign state, it has yet to be transformed into a completely normal country, and the efforts of all the Taiwan people are needed to overcome the difficulties. While Taiwan is moving toward rectification of its name, writing a new constitution, and making a bid to join the United Nations, China is seeking to contain Taiwan in the international community; it also puts pressure on Taiwan via the United States to obstruct Taiwan's moves toward [becoming a] a normal country. China's purpose is nothing but to prevent Taiwan from becoming a normal country, so that it can realize its aggressive dream of annexing the island. ..."

B) "Determining That Those Are His Own Wishes, the United States Downplays [Chen's Remarks]"

Washington correspondent Nadia Tsao said in an analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (3/7):

"... Having dealt with President Chen for seven years since 2000, officials in the Bush administration and scholars in Washington have been trained into experts on Chen, and they have become highly sensitive toward Taiwan's domestic politics. Everyone seems to be able to speculate that Chen's remarks were made out of domestic political concern, and no one seriously believes that he is really ready to declare Taiwan independence or write a new constitution. But Chen's credibility has received harsh criticism in private by Bush administration officials, and when viewed in the long term, Chen does have a price to pay for this, and he has also offered Beijing opportunities to pursue and maul the Taiwan issue fiercely. ...

"But as expected by many people, the State Department's public comment on March 5 downplayed Chen's announcement. One reason behind this was that Chen's remarks this time contained no bullets [i.e. he was bluffing]. ... Also, another reason was because what Chen announced that he wanted to do is mostly restricted by Taiwan's political climate, in which the opposition parties take up the

majority of seats in the legislative body, and by international reality. It is in reality very difficult for Taiwan to write a new constitution, to declare independence or to join the United Nations under the name of Taiwan. A scholar therefore admitted in private that it would be more appropriate to call Chen's announcement his own wishes rather than his policy. ..."

C) "The Four Wants Are Meant to Find a Way out for the New President"

Columnist Paul Lin noted in the pro-independence, Chinese-language "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (3/7):

"... In 1999, one year prior to the 2000 presidential elections, the then soon-to-retire President Lee Teng-hui proposed the 'special country-to-country' doctrine, which aroused considerable criticism inside and outside Taiwan. But that was a new contribution Lee made for Taiwan in terms of its national identity. Following Lee's track, President Chen Shui-bian proposed 'one country on either side of the Taiwan Strait' [in 2002]. Now sixty percent of the people residing in Taiwan regard themselves as 'Taiwanese people.' President Chen also tossed off the "Four Wants and One Without" proposal one year prior to his retirement, which will serve as an important indicator to determine whether Taiwan's future president will stick to Taiwan-centered values."

D) "China Is a Clear and Present Danger"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/7):

"China plans to spend 350.92 billion yuan (US\$44.94 billion) on national defense this year, a 17.8 percent increase over last year. The rapid growth of China's military expenditure not only heightens tension in the Taiwan Strait and unsettles its neighbors but worries the world community as a whole. ... China's military expansion is clearly not of a defensive nature, and Taiwan is planted firmly in its crosshairs. China already has more than 900 missiles aimed at Taiwan along its eastern seaboard and has established a legal pretext for using them - along with other types of military force - by passing the 'Anti-Secession' Law in 2005. ...

"The US must object - and intervene - if Beijing ever decided to violate regional security by using military force against Taiwan or Japan. China has been striving to develop its own submarines in order to prevent the US from sending aircraft carriers into the Taiwan Strait, as it did after China launched missiles into the strait in 1996. In addition, Beijing's anti-satellite missile test in January demonstrated that it is also preparing for war in space. Since the US is the only state with appreciable military capabilities in space, one need not be a political scientist to figure out who China is gearing up to fight. Such zealous development of "defensive" weaponry is certainly in conflict with China's "peaceful rise." This buildup is a threat to international peace, yet in its zeal to maintain business ties, the international community chooses to either turn a blind eye or to appease Beijing. ..."

E) "What Taiwan Wants, What Taiwan Needs"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (3/7):

"... As is often the case, it is necessary to note that Chen's statement that 'Taiwan wants independence' was neither a promise to declare independence nor an admission that Taiwan is not independent now. ... Even more importantly, Chen's enunciation of Taiwan's 'four wants' clearly aims to seize the initiative for the DPP in setting a positive agenda for the upcoming year-end Legislative Yuan elections and even the March 2008 presidential sweepstakes by offering a catchy and dynamic slogan encapsulating the DPP's vision for Taiwan's future. ...

"In the future, we believe that Chen can perform his best service to the DPP and Taiwan society by ensuring that the governing party unites behind a single candidate who is both visionary and pragmatic. However, we urge Chen to refrain from trying to put his stamp on a campaign which will be the responsibility of the new standard-bearer who will take up the task of leading the DPP and perhaps Taiwan's society into the post-Chen era."

F) "A-Bian's Four Wants Dispute with Hu Jintao's four Nos"

Emerson Chang, Director of the Department of International Studies at Nan Hua University, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (3/7):

"... But in reality, everything, including the reason why the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) chose to hold its

anniversary banquet on March 4 and the content of President Chen's speech, was a result of careful planning. March 4 marked the second anniversary of the day when [Chinese President] Hu Jintao's proposed his 'four points' -- (namely, [China] insists that its one-China principle will not waver, its efforts to pursue peaceful unification will never be abandoned, its guidelines faithfully to place hopes in the Taiwan people will not change, and it will never compromise when it comes to separatists' moves toward of Taiwan independence.) Chen deliberately chose to announce his 'Four Wants' to challenge Hu's 'Four Nos.' ...

"... The United States' decision to downplay the matter has removed Chen's doubts about '[China] restraining Taiwan via the United States.' Washington's acceptance of Taiwan's Presidential Office's explanation that 'Taiwan wants independence means that Taiwan wants to maintain its independent status' has, without a doubt, endorsed Chen's next step. If Chen chooses an appropriate occasion to announce 'Taiwan is independent, and the Taiwan people have stood up,' it will not only produce an impact on election campaigning in Taiwan, but the United States will also be caught up in a dilemma between whether to show support or oppose [Chen's statement]. Also, China will think that it was played and tricked jointly by Washington and Taipei. [Should this be the case,] the three sides will face a showdown."

YOUNG